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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COPENHAGEN 000454

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [GG](#) [RU](#) [UP](#) [TU](#) [DA](#)

SUBJECT: GEORGIA/ABKHAZIA: MFA EXPLAINS FM MOELLER'S VISIT

REF: A. COPENHAGEN 445 (NOTAL)

[1](#)B. TBILISI 1881

Classified By: (U) Ambassador Laurie S. Fulton; reason 1.4 (b, d)

[1](#)1. (C) This message contains an action request regarding Georgia/Abkhazia and NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine; please see paragraph 7.

[1](#)2. (C) SUMMARY: FM Moeller's October 6 visit to Abkhazia was coordinated with and supported by the Georgian Government. It came at his own initiative and was intended to "demonstrate strong political commitment to keep the Abkhaz issue high on the EU agenda as well as help prepare the ground for confidence-building measures," not/not to undercut EU unity on non-recognition of Abkhazia. Moeller got a "surprisingly cool reception" in Sukhumi; the de facto authorities were annoyed that the Danish Government had had no direct contact with them in arranging the visit, and may have been posturing ahead of elections. MFA shared the text of a COP COREU report that is included at paragraph 6. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)3. (C) William Boe, Deputy Head of MFA's Department of European Neighborhood and Russia, gave Pol-EconCouns a readout October 13 of FM Moeller's trip to Georgia and Abkhazia, in which he himself had participated. This was the first visit to Abkhazia by an EU Foreign Minister since it declared independence from Georgia. Boe shared COP COREU report on the visit (see paragraph 6 below) and explained that the trip was at Moeller's own initiative, stemming from his prior involvement: when the war broke out in August 2008, the Secretary of State Rice called Moeller to ask if he could help, knowing that he had visited Georgia the month before. Denmark does not want the Abkhaz issue to become frozen for the long term as has happened with northern Cyprus, Boe remarked.

[1](#)4. (C) While Moeller's 2008 trip was arranged through the United Nations, this time the UN declined, apparently for fear of being seen to legitimize the de facto authorities of Abkhazia. Taking care not to have any direct contact with the de facto authorities in organizing the visit, the Government of Denmark worked through the Danish Refugee Council. The de facto authorities were miffed and gave Moeller a "surprisingly cool reception," which may have been due partly to posturing ahead of upcoming elections. They did not greet Moeller on arrival at their "foreign ministry," though the cameras were waiting at de facto FM Shamba's office. Moeller pressed the authorities to allow the European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) access; their reply was that access would be subject to the condition that while in Abkhazia, the EUMM not purport to be in Georgia.

15. (C) Boe stressed that prior to Moeller's trip, the Danish embassies in Washington and the EU-3 capitals (Paris, London and Berlin) had sounded out their hosts, and Washington had raised no objection. In Boe's view, Moeller's visit had accomplished its purpose of "breaking the ice" (i.e., showing that it is possible to engage with the de facto authorities of Abkhazia without undercutting the principle of non-recognition) and demonstrating that the Abkhaz issue remains high on the EU agenda. Boe alluded to fears that the issue could fall off the USG agenda; he noted that on two occasions, EUR A/S Gordon had been expected to participate in the Geneva Process but had been kept away by other commitments.

16. (C) There follows the text of the COP COREU report shared by MFA:

QUOTE:

RESTREINT UE

FM COP COREU

INFO ALL COREU NORMAL

CFSP/COP/0121/09

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ACRONYM COEST

SUBJECT: COEST - Visit by Danish Foreign Minister Moeller to Georgia 5-7 October 2009

FM Per Stig Moeller visited Georgia 5-7 October 2009 and met i.a. with President Saakashvili, FM Vashadze, Head of NSC Tkeshelashvili, State Minister for Reintegration

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Yakobashvili, Speaker of Parliament Bakradze, representatives of the parliamentary opposition and Head of the Abkhaz government-in-exile Baramia. During a visit to Abkhazia FM Moeller met de facto President Bagapsh and de facto FM Shamba. FM Moeller had a briefing at EUMM Tbilisi headquarter and at the Zugdidi field office.

All Georgian interlocutors focused on the war in August 2008 and argued that the Tagliavini report proved that Russia was responsible. They were all strongly interested in strengthening relations to the EU and hoped that visa facilitation and negotiations on the SA-agreement would move forward soon.

President Saakashvili briefed on Georgian principles for engaging with the populations of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, as well as the de facto authorities. Tbilisi would continue its policy of people-to-people contacts and was ready to be pragmatic as long as the principle of non-recognition was not compromised. A solution on the ships seized by Georgian authorities en route to Abkhazia was expected soon in the context of bilateral talks with Turkey with the aim of finding a general "modus vivendi" concerning Turkish maritime transport.

The visit to Abkhazia was carried out in agreement with the Georgian authorities and messages were thoroughly discussed with FM Vashadze. The aim was to demonstrate strong political commitment to keep the Abkhaz issue high on the EU agenda as well as help prepare the ground for confidence-building measures.

The reception in Sukhumi was cool, because the de facto authorities were annoyed that direct contacts had been avoided in preparations for the visit which had been arranged through a Danish NGO. During the discussions the mistrust of Georgia was as noticeable as was the perceived need to rely on Russia in the current phase. FM Moeller made it clear that the EU line on non-recognition was not up for discussion and that Abkhazia faced continued international isolation. He encouraged the de facto authorities to engage in confidence-building measures and seek pragmatic ways to let the EU contribute to improve the economic and social

situation of the population, especially returned IDPs. He also raised the question of the return of Georgian IDP's north of Gali. The response was not enthusiastic but Bagapsh was ready to look at confidence-building in a broad range of fields (incl. transport, energy and infrastructure) if the status issue would not be jeopardized. The key message of FM Moeller of looking beyond the issue of recognition in order to find pragmatic solutions to the concerns of the people and build confidence with the rest of Georgia was, as expected, difficult for the Abkhaz side to work with at this stage. However, the Abkhaz side appreciated the level of political commitment to help identify solutions in the short and medium term, and expressed a willingness to learn from other conflicts over status issues in order to move forward. Bagapsh firmly rejected any return of Georgian IDP's north of Gali. He warned that this would lead to a new war.

The Abkhaz side repeated its grievances concerning the EU policy, incl. on visa policy and investments. If the EU was sincere in wishing to avoid isolation at least it could give Abkhaz students the possibility to study in Europe. Although Sukhumi pretended to downplay the importance of the EU non-recognition policy, a clear frustration was palpable. Also, a frustration that the visit of FM Moeller provided no pretext to undermine EU policy (nor during planning neither during execution) seemed to cause a certain frustration. (NOTE: Sentence as received. END NOTE.)

FM Moeller underlined the need to continue the Geneva Process and to give the EUMM access to Abkhazia. Sukhumi was willing to accept EUMM in Abkhazia if it was made clear, that in this case the EUMM did not operate in Georgia.

FM Moeller debriefed the Georgian authorities on the visit and discussed the feasibility of some of the concrete proposals by Sukhumi. A more detailed debrief was given by State Secretary Zilmer-Johns to deputy FM's Bokeria and Nalbandov. Tbilisi agreed with FM Moeller on the need to intensify efforts to avoid having the status issue block the expressed will by both sides to engage. Tbilisi would include the concrete information in its current work on a way

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forward on possible confidence-building measures including trade, transport and education. FM Moeller undertook to continue to work closely with EU partners to look for ways forward, and FM Moeller has already been in contact with HR Solana to debrief on the visit.

END QUOTE.

17. (C) ACTION REQUESTED: Post would appreciate any information from the Department that we can share with MFA (at Boe's request) regarding USG thoughts on:

- next steps on Georgia/Abkhazia;
 - NATO membership for Georgia and Ukraine.
- FULTON